

Preventing Reduction in English Classrooms in Japan: Roles of Teachers and the Language Policy

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Reduction occurs widely in classrooms at all levels and in all contexts. List any instances from your own classroom of hygiene resources that you have used in the face of embarrassment. Compare your list with Mackay's (below). Can you trace the origin of embarrassment back to any aspect of language policy (cf Tollefson)?

Mackay's list of hygiene resources includes the following. Teachers:

- reason aloud
- answer their own questions
- rephrase their students' answers to make them acceptable
- substitute an easy task for a difficult one
- expand minimal student responses
- break down questioning into simple yes/no answers
- take over reading aloud if the pupils perform too slowly
- produce simple gap-filling exercises
- get students to copy and learn by heart
- dictate notes
- create written texts orally with the whole class

1 Introduction

1.1 The Japanese language policy and reality in classrooms

Ten years have passed since the Japanese Ministry of Education announced the present guidelines for high schools, which said that English education should aim at developing students' abilities to communicate. However, what is happening in classrooms does not seem to help students develop competence to use English. Particularly, in "Oral Communication" lessons, introduced along with the 1989 guidelines, many students hesitate to speak English in front of other students, and teachers strive just to get them to say a few words of English. Often teachers alter planned activities to simpler ones. What is most problematic at that time is that teachers are likely to escape from the uncomfortable conditions by reducing the value of students' tasks, and thus restricting their opportunities to develop communicative competence.

Under the circumstances, English teachers in Japan are now caught in a dilemma. Since the grammar-translation method has long been implemented in the classroom, to teach students communicative competence is an absolutely new experience for them. They know they have not been doing a sufficient job in developing students' communicative abilities, but do not know how to change it. What are the problems underlying the situation? Are only teachers to blame for the failure? Is there anything the government should do to improve the existing conditions?

1.2 The aim of this paper

Mackay (1993) observes classrooms in the Inuit community in Canada, where content subjects are insufficiently taught through English, students' second language, producing embarrassment. He points out the problems of reduction caused by teachers' solutions to overcome embarrassment. By comparing the Japanese situation with the Inuit case, the problems in Japanese classrooms may become clearer: both the problems of teachers and those of the language policy.

This paper first compares hygiene resources I have used in the face of embarrassment in English classrooms in Japan with those observed by Mackay (1993) in Inuit classrooms in Canada. It discusses some of the similarities and differences in terms of backgrounds, and points out the problems for Japanese teachers. Further, the

paper traces the origin of classroom embarrassment in Japan back to the Japanese language policy. It discusses the problems of the Japanese language policy in terms of entrance examinations, teacher training, authorized textbooks, and research on teaching methodology, and finally suggests possible measures the government may take to support teachers in developing students' communicative competence.

2 Comparison of hygiene resources in Japanese and Inuit classrooms

2.1 Hygiene resources in Inuit classrooms

When favorable development of lessons is obstructed by students' insufficient abilities to perform the planned work, teachers and more efficient students inevitably experience embarrassment (Mackay, 1993). Embarrassment is produced by students' behaviors, including silence, and slow or incomprehensible responses to teachers' questions. What teachers usually do to rescue students and themselves from embarrassment is to resort to what Mackay calls "hygiene resources". Mackay observes classrooms in the Inuit community in the eastern Canada, where English, their second language, is used in teaching content subjects. He finds that teachers employ several hygiene strategies, such as taking over students' roles and reducing assigned tasks, including answering their own questions and asking simple factual questions (as shown in Appendix 1).

2.2 Hygiene resources in Japanese Classrooms

In Japanese classrooms too, teachers often face embarrassment and are forced to use hygiene resources. Especially in "Oral Communication" classes, where students are expected to communicate in spoken English, they tend to hesitate to speak English and teachers often need to use strategies when embarrassment occurs. Japanese students' silence is frequently observed in English classrooms, partly because Japanese people tend not to express their ideas in front of other people, as Japan is one good example of having culture in which "silence is tolerated and valued in interactive settings" (Montgomery, 1995, p. 210). It may be also because learning a foreign language is one situation which is likely to cause uneasiness; when different social groups or cultures meet, people's sociolinguistic norms are likely to conflict (Holmes, 1992). Moreover, the students' frequent silence may partly be because students do not have adequate level

of English to complete assigned tasks, even though they want to.

In the face of embarrassment, I have employed several solutions (see Appendix 1). Some of them are positive, but others are negative measures, which appear to greatly reduce achievement in tasks.

2.2.1 Positive strategies to overcome embarrassment: to make activities effective

Some of the measures I have taken do not appear to reduce the value of students' tasks, and rather make the tasks more productive. One of them is to repeat the same question to the same student or his/her classmates, not changing the level of cognitive demand but possibly giving hints. At the same time I encourage students to express their opinions in front of people, telling them that they should not be afraid of making mistakes. I encourage students to accept the ambiguity and uncertainty which is essential for learning language. The significance of helping students to "live with the insecurity intrinsic to trying to say what you really mean cannot be overestimated" (Lewis, 1996, p. 14).

The second way is to modify activities into more effective forms. I often change individual activities to pair or group work so students can cooperate, with proficient students helping low-proficiency students. Hyland (1991) considers that it is important to choose classroom tasks which involve information sharing, cooperative reasoning, opinion sharing and values clarification. Japanese teachers frequently take "a group approach", because Japanese students seem to be excellent in cooperating and fond of group work.

In addition, I transform monotonous activities, such as those that require memorizing fixed expressions, into consciousness-raising tasks, for example, identifying lexical patterns in learned texts, or finding differences between Japanese and English collocations. Since in consciousness-raising activities one of the main objectives is "to think about samples of language and to draw their own conclusions about how the language works" (Willis and Willis, 1996, p. 63), and there is no one correct answer, embarrassment is unlikely to occur. Actually, I found that when conducting such activities the atmosphere of the classroom was more relaxing and students were more tolerant of different ideas than with a traditional teacher-directed teaching, and it seemed that both proficient students and low- proficiency students were enjoying and

learning at their own levels.

The third is to divide classes into smaller-size units: for example, from the officially mandated 40 students in a classroom to 20 students, which may still be too large, compared with Brown's (1994) ideal class size of no more than a dozen, but nevertheless made a great improvement. When our school's request was accepted by the educational committee of the local government, which is not always the case, we could have some smaller classes, and teachers could make classes of more similar proficiency levels. As a result, individualized teacher-student attention as well as students' opportunities to speak were increased.

2.2.2 Negative solutions to cope with embarrassment: to reduce students' tasks

I noticed that my colleagues and I had used several measures unconsciously to reduce students' tasks and deprive them of chances to learn, in addition to the hygiene resources observed by Mackay. Several solutions were taken in an attempt to avoid embarrassment from the start.

I sometimes skipped cognitively demanding communicative activities and concentrated on simpler tasks to finish classes on time. In addition, teachers as a whole decided to choose textbooks which contained simpler or less demanding assignments. Appendix 2 shows examples of activities for introducing Japanese culture to foreign people in four authorized high school textbooks for "Oral Communication A": "New Start" (Hamamoto et al., 1997), "Eco" (Yamamoto et al., 1997), "On Air" (Yashiro et al., 1997) and "Interact" (Ishii et al., 1997). The task of "New Start" is only a repetition, and that of "Eco" is substituting and repeating. "On Air" and "Interact" represent more cognitively demanding tasks, and require students to present what they do on New Year's Day. Moreover, "Interact" encourages students to discuss the topic with classmates and to represent the results to the class. However, the textbooks our school chose were "Eco" and "On Air".

Moreover, in our high school English teachers chose to teach "Oral Communication B", which requires students mainly to do listening activities, and little speaking in English, compared with "Oral Communication A" and "Oral Communication C". Appendix 3 shows objectives and contents of the three "Oral Communication" subjects, indicated in the Ministry's guidelines. In short, "Oral

Communication A” deals with speaking and listening in daily situations, “Oral Communication B” handles mainly listening, and “Oral Communication C” aims to develop abilities of organizing and representing one’s own ideas.

In Hiroshima prefecture few high schools teach “Oral Communication C”, which seems the most cognitively demanding subject. Most high schools teach either “Oral Communication A” or “Oral Communication B”, and high schools with students focusing on entrance examinations tend to teach “Oral Communication B”, because some of the private universities are starting listening comprehension tests as part of their entrance examinations. It cannot be denied that teachers prefer “Oral Communication B” because it imposes less burden on Japanese teachers than “A” and “C”. Teachers can have scripts of the tapes beforehand, and continue to control students as before. These measures to avoid embarrassment are taken by many high schools in Japan, which are thus restricting students’ opportunities to develop communicative competence.

2.3 Backgrounds of Japanese and Inuit classrooms

Comparing hygiene resources taken in Japanese classrooms with Inuit classrooms, there are some similarities and differences. What are their backgrounds? Appendix 4 shows a comparison of the language situation between Japanese classrooms and Inuit classrooms.

First, in both cases teachers face classroom embarrassment and resort to hygiene resources, which lead to reduction in achievement. There appears to be a big gap between the policies and reality in both situations. The Canadian government demands that teachers teach content subjects through English in Inuit classrooms, and the Japanese government that they teach English communication. However, in both situations the students’ mother tongue is quite different from English (Shibata, 1993), and English is not used in students’ homes and communities. As a result, students do not appear to have adequate competence for these activities. If the governments truly hope for success in the language education, they need to take measures to support teachers and students to prevent reduction.

Second, Japanese teachers may have greater possibilities to make tasks more

appropriate and workable while maintaining a cognitively demanding level: for example, by introducing group work or consciousness-raising activities. This is because in Inuit classrooms teachers are obligated to teach content subjects, and they need to proceed through lessons in a limited time by eliminating embarrassment. On the contrary, in the Japanese case, content subjects are taught through Japanese, and English teachers can concentrate on teaching the language.

Third, although teachers in Inuit classrooms depend on hygiene measures, they seem mostly to continue to teach subjects through English. On the other hand, teachers in Japanese classrooms are likely to avoid embarrassment from the start, by avoiding cognitively demanding communicative activities and focusing on reading or grammar lessons conducted in Japanese. What are the backgrounds for these situations? In the Inuit case, after graduation from secondary schools students may need to use English at universities or at workplaces. Also, since Inuits are a minority in Canadian society and English is used in the media and in contact with legal, medical and social services, acquiring English is a matter of vital importance for students.

However, in the Japanese case, English is learned as a subject in secondary schools, and content subjects are taught in Japanese through university. Also, to be able to use English is not an essential condition to find employment, although if they can use English they may have greater chances. Moreover, since Japanese constitute the vast majority of Japanese society, Japanese language is used in all the social and legal services. Consequently, the teachers' ability to teach English is not demonstrated by students' ability to use English in the Japanese society, but by their success in entrance examinations for universities, which demand mainly grammatical knowledge and reading abilities. Furthermore, English teachers in Japan are not always efficient users of English themselves, which may also be a factor that leads teachers to avoid communicative activities.

3 Japanese language policy as a major factor of classroom embarrassment

We have seen that Japanese teachers are responsible for reduction in achievement of English education, especially in communicative activities. However, answers to the question of why teachers are placed in a situation where embarrassment occurs appear to lie in the Japanese language policy. If so, what measures can the

government take to prevent such reduction?

3.1 Effects of language policies on second language acquisition

Language policy refers to “a government authorized, long-term, sustained, and conscious effort to alter a languages’ function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems” (Weinstein, 1980, p. 56). There are several objectives that may motivate actual decision-making in language planning in a particular society: assimilation, pluralism, unification, internationalization, facilitation and purification, which are likely to benefit groups or disadvantage them (Kennedy, Knowles, Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1998). Language policy may have a strong impact on language acquisition -- as either an obstructive or a facilitative power. This is because “language learning is often a component in modernization and development programs and in ethnic, religious, economic, and political struggles” where language is a means to achieve social and economic development, and political power (Tollefson, 1989, p. 31).

Language policy consists of two related processes: formulation and implementation (Tollefson, 1989). Implementation is essential if a policy’s objectives are to be successful. If a government has decided to change language education, “there has to be considerable investment in development of the syllabus including tests, materials and textbooks, and teachers will need to be trained” (Kennedy, Knowles, Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1998, p. 60).

Tollefson (1989) considers that language policy may affect second language learning through various factors, including input variables, learner variables, learning variables and learned variables. Input variables indicate the language that learners are exposed to, inside or outside classrooms. Learner variables are learner characteristics, including personality, motivation, and cognitive aptitude. Learning factors refer to learning strategies, including contact with native speakers, high quality instruction by teachers with native fluency, and availability of motivating materials. Learned variables contain elements that learners are expected to learn, indicated in a syllabus or textbooks.

It may be significant to examine to what extents these factors are planned or affected by the language policy, instead of regarding the variables as being unplanned and residing in individuals or situations (Tollefson, 1989). If teachers can trace the origins of problems in their classes back to political or educational decisions, they might

be able determine how to remedy the problems.

3.2 Problems of the Japanese government's language policy

One of the main objectives of the Japanese government's current language policy can be characterized as internationalization, which is defined by Wardlaugh (1998) as "the adoption of a non-indigenous language of wider communication either as an official language or for such purposes as education or trade" (p. 348). Because of the recent changes in Japanese economical and political position in the world, the government has decided to alter its objectives in English education to focus on communication, a tool to exchange cultures, technologies, ideas and opinions with people in the world (Suzuki, 1995). However, in reality there is frequent embarrassment in English communicative activities and reduction in achievement, and the policy at the school level seems to be failing. In order to find solutions, this paper discusses four elements affected by the language policy, which seem to be working as obstructive factors in classrooms, and causing embarrassment and reduction.

3.2.1 Entrance examinations focused on reading tests

As seen earlier, since English is not used in the Japanese society, students' English abilities are demonstrated mainly by entrance examinations. Therefore, contents of examinations directly affect students' motivations as well as teachers' focus. However, the English used in examinations is often pointed out as strange or unnatural (Soejima, 1995). Moreover, even though the language policy aims at developing communicative competence, most entrance examinations for universities continue to be focused on grammar and reading questions.

The English test of the 1998 Center Examination for universities, which was taken by all the students who applied for national universities, was a multiple-choice test, and did not have any listening comprehension, and consisted mainly of grammar and lexis tests, separated from contexts, and reading comprehension. Out of 200 points, 110 points (55%) were devoted to reading comprehension, and 60 points (30%) were grammar or lexis questions, made of concocted sentences. The rest of the 30 points (15%) concerned pronunciation or daily conversation, although they were all written questions and required only memorization.

Surprisingly, some of the elements asked in last year's Center Examination are similar to the tests about 100 years ago. Appendix 5 shows questions from entrance examinations in the Meiji period (Sakai, 1996) and those of the 1998 Center Examination for national universities. In both cases the first questions are related to an "enough -to" pattern, which is very popular in high school students' study-aid textbooks for entrance examinations such as Maintop (Ikuta, 1993). Teachers introduce this pattern over and over in class, and encourage students to memorize it. The second examples are both concerned with a "this noun of mine" pattern, which teachers also repeat in English classrooms. Sakai (1996) points out that the biggest problems of entrance examinations are that they are made of isolated sentences apart from contexts, reading texts are too short, every question is grammar-related after all, and the English used is not authentic.

In the background of this bias, there seems to be a history of Japanese language policies. Japan has historically been learning culture, civilization, technology, and social systems from foreign countries through reading documents. The target country had long been China, and it changed to the Netherlands or Spain in the Edo period. In the Meiji era it became Great Britain, and after World War it was changed to the United States (Suzuki, 1995). Thus, since the Meiji era the most important foreign language has been English, and the focus has continued to be on reading.

Especially, immediately after the War, Japan started to invest systematically in the development of information resources by translating English scientific knowledge into Japanese (Kaplan, 1987). Consequently, English education became heavily dependent on reading or one-way translation ability from written English to Japanese, which was reflected in entrance examinations. The government should realize that examinations have been neglecting the emerging necessity of other important competence, namely abilities to communicate (Sakai, 1996).

3.2.2 "Oral Communication" lessons without teacher training

The 1989 guidelines announced that every high school must teach one of three "Oral Communication" subjects: "Oral Communication A", "Oral Communication B" or "Oral Communication C". However, since many English teachers in Japan have hardly been taught communicative competence, it may have been unjust to request them

to conduct communicative lessons without giving them special training. As a result, what has happened is a tendency to avoid communicative activities, which may require a willingness to attempt to communicate real meaning even with inadequate expressions. As we have seen in section 2.2.2, teachers avoid teaching “Oral Communication C”, which includes organizing and presenting one’s ideas, and prefer “Oral Communication B”, which consists of mainly listening activities (see Appendix 3).

In March 1999, the government announced new guidelines for high school, which will be effective from 2003. It seems that the government recognized the problem of “Oral Communication B” and decided to abolish the subject. The guidelines say that from 2003 all high schools must first teach “Oral Communication A”, the name of which will be changed to “Oral Communication ”, and after finishing the subject, if a school wants, it is possible to teach “Oral Communication C”, which will be “Oral Communication ”. However, the problem remains. If the Ministry does little about the implementation, such as offering teachers’ training, it is expected that there will be few schools that teach “Oral Communication C ()”. In addition, teachers may emphasize listening activities and memorizing daily expressions in “Oral Communication A ()”. If the Japanese government truly aims at developing students’ communicative ability, it may be significant to make “C” () compulsory, accompanied by teacher training.

Along with the introduction of “Oral Communication” subjects, the government started the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program in 1987, and has invited native English speakers to work in Japan to help make students and teachers more communicative in spoken English and to assist in the internationalization of Japan. The effects of native speakers’ being at schools may be tremendous (Tollefson, 1989). However, the government should remember that most English classes are still conducted by Japanese teachers. For example, in our high school, a native English teacher visits the school once a week, and conducts three lessons on that day while the total English lessons taught by Japanese teachers are 120 lessons a week, with each of 8 teachers conducting 15 lessons.

Therefore, what the government may need to do is to train Japanese teachers. Leonard (1994) considers, from the experience of having been a native English teacher

in Japan, that if teachers are not confident and relaxed in teaching, students, especially Japanese students, get nervous, which may easily produce embarrassment. However, now Japanese teachers cannot be said to have confidence in teaching communicative abilities, and their roles are likely to remain to check if students' responses are correct even in "Oral Communication" lessons.

3.2.3 Non-authentic authorized textbooks with little cognitive demand

Authorized textbooks can be considered to influence students' behaviors greatly, especially in "Oral Communication" subjects where teachers may have little experience and rely on textbooks. However, some activities in textbooks do not represent cognitively demanding tasks, and only require simple repetition or substitution as seen in Appendix 2. In addition, topics dealt with do not appear motivating. For example, the activity in "Interact" shown in Appendix 2 demands students to present what they do on New Year's Day. However, even though the activity is set up to introduce Japanese culture to foreigners, in reality all students and the teacher in the classroom are Japanese. They all know what Japanese do on the occasion, and there is little motivation to conduct the activity, where embarrassment is likely to occur when some of the students are not able to represent their stories to the class. Furthermore, authorized textbooks are mostly written by non-native English speakers, and English in the books is not always natural. It is surprising that even "Oral Communication" textbooks are mostly written by Japanese, and thus although accompanied tapes are recorded by native speakers, they tend to sound unnatural.

Japanese high school textbooks and materials could be altered in two ways. First, they can be more cognitively demanding. Second, they can be more authentic and interesting, using motivating current topics, such as songs, cinema and world news, not through written materials with concocted tapes, as at present, but with authentic audiovisual aids. What may also be important is, as Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi (1990) state, the fact that it is teachers' attitudes to language textbooks that most of all determine their effectiveness.

3.2.4 Insufficient research on teaching methodology

What may be most significant and lacking in the Japanese language policy may

be a thorough reconsideration of teaching methodology. The government may need to earnestly reflect on why Japanese students cannot use English after hard work of 6 years, and consider there may be something wrong in the teaching methods in Japan.

In 1993 the Conference for Improvement of Foreign Language Teaching, sponsored by the Ministry of Education, proposed several measures to promote communicative teaching. It suggested steps such as implementing listening comprehension in entrance examinations, employing new teachers with fluency, supporting overseas studies for student teachers and inviting more native speakers (Araki, 1994). However, there is no proposal for reflection on or improvement of teaching methodology.

There could be many elements that need modification in English teaching in Japan. One focus may be to recognize differences in Japanese and English. It can be considered indispensable to help students compare Japanese and English discourse through consciousness-raising activities. For example, Nakajima (1987) considers there is a complete difference in ways of thinking between the “centrifugal” approach of English speakers and the “centripetal” approach of Japanese speakers (Ootsu, 1993). Ootsu suggests that English people are likely to start focusing on one object and expand their visions from there, while Japanese people start from a broad visual field and then search for an object to focus on. He considers that it is essential for Japanese to change their way of viewing the world from a Japanese way to an English way, to be able to use English effectively. However, the importance to focus on difference between the two languages seems to have been neglected in English education in Japan.

It may also be significant for Japanese teachers to encourage students “to examine their own experience of language and to learn from it” (Willis, 1993, p. 91). Such reflection can be made possible through data-driven learning, helping students investigate commonly occurring patterns based around a word, which is an essential factor in a learner-centered methodology (Johns, 1991). Further, it can be suggested for Japanese teachers to take a lexical approach, which can be developed “with great flexibility, in proportion to what learners already know and what at any particular stage of learning they need to know” (Little, 1994, p. 120).

One of the great problems in English classrooms in Japan seems to lie in the teacher-centered method, implemented even in “Oral Communication” subjects. Since the

methodology greatly affects the variables discussed in the above sections, including examinations, teacher training and authorized textbooks, the government should earnestly research for effective methodology, or aid teachers to investigate teaching methods suitable for Japanese students.

4 Conclusion

What is most problematic in teachers' taking hygiene measures in the face of embarrassment is that it reduces students' participation in tasks, and even though it creates an impression that they are progressing, in reality they are not. English teachers in Japan should make every effort not to lower the level of cognitive demand for students, and to help students acquire communicative competence. For this aim the Japanese government needs to improve several features to support teachers' and students' endeavors. This paper suggested possible measures that could be taken by both teachers and the language policy to prevent reduction in high school classrooms. The effects of the language policy on junior high schools and elementary schools need to be further investigated.

Although Japan's English teachers need to work in adverse circumstances where official support is not sufficient, since teachers are not only subject to language planning but are themselves planners for their own classrooms (Kennedy, 1982), teachers should strive to deal with the problems. Teachers need to be aware of the fact that the role of English has been changing in Japan, and realize that the English ability Japanese students really need is as a useful tool for communication. Teachers should not avoid communicative activities, and should encourage students to attempt to send their messages. Teachers' roles in classrooms need to be changed from helping students find only one correct answer and from teaching as many things as possible in a limited time. Teachers can work "as an editor and adviser rather than providing correction and evaluation" (Lewis, 1996, p. 15).

At the same time, the government needs to develop measures more earnestly to implement the current policy to build students' communicative abilities. There seem to be many elements that could be improved including entrance examinations, "Oral Communication" lessons, teacher training, authorized textbooks, classroom-size and teaching methodology. This paper only identified the problems under each factor, and

the ways of improvement need to be investigated further. Teachers should do their best in what they can. However, the government should be aware that if they do not support teachers, there will inevitably be a limit in the development that can be achieved. Teachers may need to appeal for more improvement, because they are ones who know the gap between the language policy and reality in classrooms.

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Appendix 1 Comparison between Mackay's hygiene resources and those I have used

Hygiene resources in Inuit classrooms observed by Mackay

- Reason aloud for the student
- answer their own questions
- utter the academic and scientific equivalent of students' answers
- substitute or expand minimal responses
- ask simple factual questions
- take over reading aloud if students read too slowly
- produce fill-in-the-slot worksheets
- write notes on the board and have students copy them
- dictate notes
- have students read aloud from the textbook in response to questions
- create written texts orally with the whole class

Solutions I have used in Japanese classrooms

Positive solutions: making activities more effective

- ask the same question to the same student after giving hints or encouraging students to express their opinions in front of the class
- modify individual activities to pair or group activities, or consciousness-raising activities
- divide classes into smaller-size units so as to make classes of more similar proficiency levels, to take care of students more individually, and give them more chances to speak

Negative solutions: reducing the value of students' tasks

- all the examples on Mackay's list
- skip cognitively-demanding activities from the beginning and concentrate on simpler, less communicative tasks
- change textbooks to less demanding and less communicative ones
- choose to teach "Oral Communication B", which consists of mainly listening activities, so that students do not have to speak English very often, compared with "Oral Communication A" or "Oral Communication C".

Appendix 2 Activities in authorised high school textbooks for "Oral Communication A"

Textbooks	Example activities for introducing Japanese culture to foreign people
New Start (1997)	<p>Role-play (Students are expected to memorise the expressions)</p> <p>A: I understand you write three kinds of characters in Japan. B: Yes, that's right. They are <i>hiragana</i>, <i>katakana</i>, and Chinese</p>

	<p>characters.</p> <p>A: What are the first two?</p> <p>B: Well, they are phonetic symbols made from Chinese characters. So you can say they are two different Japanese alphabets.</p>
Eco (1997)	<p>Substitute the underlined words and role-play</p> <p>A: What do you call a <u>suzuri</u> in English? (omikoshi)</p> <p>B: What's it used for?</p> <p>A: It's used for <u>making ink for brush writing</u>. (carrying a god around the neighbourhood)</p> <p>B: Oh, it's <u>an ink stone</u>. (a portable shrine)</p> <p>A: I see. Thank you.</p>
On Air (1997)	<p>Check what you do on New Year's Day. Then ask four classmates what they do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wear a kimono ● Visit temples or shrines ● Eat osechi (festive food for the New Year) ● Make New Year's resolutions ● Get some otoshidama (money given to children as a gift on the New Year) ● Watch TV
Interact (1997)	<p>Write what you do regarding the new year events, such as your first visit of the year to a shrine, festive food for the New Year and New Year gifts. Discuss the topics with 3 people. Present your discussion to the class.</p>

Appendix 3 Objectives and contents of “Oral Communication” subjects (A, B, C) indicated in the 1989 Ministry of Education’ guidelines

Subject	Objectives	Contents
Oral Communication A (Oral Communication from 2003)	To develop students’ abilities to understand speakers’ intentions and to express their own ideas in spoken English in everyday situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To listen to and understand what is spoken or read aloud naturally ● To express one’s ideas in spoken English, using simple expressions ● To talk with other people on familiar topics, using expressions appropriate to the given situation and purpose

Oral Communication B (will be abolished from 2003)	To develop students' abilities to understand speakers' intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To listen to and understand what is spoken or read aloud naturally ● To listen to passages and understand the outline or the main points ● To organise ideas about what has been listened to and express them effectively
Oral Communication C (Oral Communication from 2003)	To develop students' abilities to organise their own ideas, present and discuss them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To organise one's intended messages and express essential points effectively ● To understand speakers' intentions and respond to them appropriately ● To express one's ideas actively in accordance with the situation and the purpose of discussion

Note: The 1989 guidelines are translated from Japanese into English by the writer of this paper.

Appendix 4 Comparison of the Inuit and Japanese language situations

Background of Inuit classrooms observed by Mackay (1993)

- At a secondary school of the Inuit community in the eastern Arctic region of Canada
- Inuits are a minority group in Canadian society
- Students' mother tongue is not English, but Inuktitut, which is quite different from English
- The objective of the language policy can be said to be "assimilation" or to preserve the power of the majority group and to create a more efficient state
- English is used in education, in contact with legal, medical and social services. Inuktitut is used in home and religion. Work use could be either language. Media is English.
- The medium of education starts as Inuktitut, proceeds through a transition phase and becomes, by about grade 4, English for all subjects except Inuktitut Culture and Language

Background of the classrooms the writer of this paper has observed

- At high schools in Japan
- Japanese people are the majority group in Japanese society
- Students' mother tongue is not English, but Japanese, which is quite different from English

- The objective of the language policy is “internationalisation” or to enable trade/technology exchange
- English is studied as a subject. Japanese is used in home, religion and media, and in contact with legal, medical and social services. To be able to use English is not an essential condition to find employment.
- The medium of education continues to be Japanese through university education.
- Teachers are not native speakers of English, and have limited abilities in terms of using English.

Appendix 5 Example questions from entrance examinations for national universities in the Meiji period and in 1998

In the Meiji period

- This picture is so good that it may be sent to the exhibition. (change the sentence into a simple sentence)

(a question of the common entrance examination for national universities in Meiji 36 (1903))
- How do you think of this book of mine? (correct the sentence)

(a question in the entrance examination for Kyoto University in Meiji 41 (1908))

In the 1998 centre test for national universities

- John is only thirteen. He is () to get a driver’s license. (choose the correct one)
1. not old enough 2. not too young 3. too old 4. young enough
- () was a present from my father. (choose the correct one)
1. My old camera of this 2. My old this camera 3. This my old camera
4. This old camera of mine

Note: Examples of questions in the Meiji period are taken from a text written by Sakai (1996).